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ABSTRACT

Racial harmony and academic excellence are two important missions for contemporary Canadian education, and teachers and administrators must be able to promote a sense of belonging and community for its many minority groups as well as to provide all Canadians with an opportunity to share and enjoy the nation's rich cultural heritage. Education is one of Canada's most important and influential forces operating in its dynamic socio-cultural milieu. Yet, many school leaders possess minimal knowledge of multiculturalism and multi-racism, a deficiency that has generated many problems for provincial school systems. Through a variety of educational, cultural and social activities, the Canadian federal government has attempted to improve this situation, but there is an urgent need for new professional development programs to enable administrators to cope effectively with the unique problems generated by contemporary Canadian society. (CB)

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MAINTAINING THE CANADIAN MOSAIC:

PREPARING SCHOOL LEADERS FOR THE CHALLENGE

Peter Murphy

Interim Report

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Maintaining the Canadian Mosaic:
Preparing School Leaders for the Challenge

Contemporary Canadian Society

The world in which we live is changing beyond belief. Few Canadians realize the dynamics of the technological revolution which is occurring in their life time. At the beginning of this century, the time span between the development and diffusion of a product was more than thirty years. Today, this time period has been reduced to less than eight years. A multiplier effect is undoubtedly in operation. This growth phenomenon was clearly explained by Toffler (1971) who noted that:

> Each new machine or technique, in a sense, changes all existing machines and techniques, by permitting us to put them together into new combinations. The number of possible combinations varies exponentially as the number of new machines or techniques rises arithmetically. Indeed, each new combination may, itself, be regarded as a new super-machine (pp. 28-29).

Similarly, Browne (1980), in a discussion on the input micro-chips are having in the industrial sector, reported that "the number of components built into one chip has roughly doubled each year for several decades, and the 1980 chip will be just one corner of the 1983 chip" (p. 41).

More recently, Toffler (1980) has stated that rapid advances in technology will result in chains of small enterprises, regionally organized, becoming the base of a nation's production system. This suggests that the Canadian economy may be slowly developing a sophisticated 'cottage industry'. Whether this happens, has yet to be seen. However, one thing is definite, as Steklas (1980) notes "[we] can expect an incredible era of technological innovation in the 1980's, given the size of the world's science and technological community, the ever increasing importance of technology to national economics and the enormous problems that need solving" (p. 5).

The social structure of Canadian society has similarly been undergoing substantial change. Two generations ago, individuals rarely travelled far from the communities where they were born. Also, male and female roles were well defined and accepted by everyone. A persons social status was often easy to determine from his speech, dress and cultural interests. Traditional values, human behaviour patterns, sexual norms and family relationships are being drastically modified in our modern society. A decade ago, Meade (1971) emphasized that the concepts of work, leisure and recreation must be re-examined in terms of the new technical state.

There is now a growing awareness that a significant proportion of the population may not be employed full-time

in the near future. As the Second World Conference on Cooperative Education, Williams (1981) reported that many developed nations were confronted with "a level of unemployment and specifically a level of unemployment among young people in the developed world the like of which we have not seen since the Depression years between the two world wars" (p. 125). What are these individuals going to do with their lives? Traditionally, public schools have been expected to prepare young people for work in commerce, industry and agriculture. However, the nature of work in these sectors of our economy has changed considerably. Fewer and fewer workers are needed for the production system. Therefore, public schools must give serious and prompt consideration to re-organizing existing programmes so more consideration is given to leisure activities (Baker, 1971).

Since the turn of the century, until very recently, the majority of immigrants to Canada came from Europe and the United States. Though these people differed in many respects they possessed common cultural, religious, social and philosophical roots. Over the past two decades an increasing number of immigrants have come from South East Asia, Latin America, and the West Indies. In contrast to earlier immigrants, these new Canadians possess few common bonds with each other or with the members of the society which they are entering. The Daudlin Commission (1984) brought to Canadians attention that:

> Recent waves of immigration have brought more visible minorities to Canada. At the same time the Canadian economy has experienced difficult times. The combination of the two seems to have produced an atmosphere that may be ripe for racially motivated incidents" (p. 69).

The social forces which have been discussed are but a few of those in contemporary Canadian Society impinging on provincial school systems. No man can be an island in our present society. Similarly, school systems, inorder to survive, must continually modify their activities in response to environmental changes and educational reforms, so that the services and products they produce are congruent with the needs of the clientele served. This self-regulation process requires that school systems obtain feedback from the environment. If the school systems fail to adapt, then as Ingram (1973) so astutely points out they may become dysfunctional.

Educational Leadership

Traditionally, school systems have responded to social changes and educational reforms by incremental policies. This policy-making approach, which Lindblom (1959) has correctly labeled as 'the science of muddling through', has been extensively utilized by educational administrators because it is politically expedient. Furthermore, as Dye

(1978) notes "incrementalism is important in reducing conflict, maintaining stability, and preserving the political system itself" (p. 34). Under these circumstances administrators endeavour to neutralize pressures for change by slightly modifying existing programmes.

In a continually changing environment a more rational approach to policy-making must be adopted. Administrators must be willing to initiate new ventures which may or may not succeed. Most educational administrators today would be classified by Rogers (1962) into one of the following adopter categories: (1) early majorities; (2) late majorities; and (3) laggards. Individuals in these categories tend to be extremely conservative and only willing to consider new ideas when they have been proven successful.

As demands for greater relevance in education intensify, administrators are experiencing substantial stress as they endeavour to mediate between external political pressure groups, who are demanding curricula be changed, and internal professional groups who do not want the existing equilibrium disturbed. After surveying beginning principals in British Columbia, Newberry (1981) reported that many of them had limited or no special training for the administrative positions which they held. Limited in-service opportunities exist for senior principals in the same province. Consequently, it is somewhat unreasonable to expect principals to cope effectively with a multitude of complex,

unique, problems generated by social educational and technological changes.

The principalship is definitely undergoing significant modifications. Canadian Society is characterized by pluralistic values which place principals in continual conflict with parents, students, teachers, central office staff and trustees. In the future, Campbell (1979) perceives that the roles performed by educational administrators will be mainly "those of social analyst, organizational diagnostician, planner and mediator" (p. 17). Furthermore, he emphasizes that a high degree of leadership behaviour will be required if principals are to provide school systems with the direction they need.

Since the late seventies, school systems have increasingly been required to account, often in great detail, how they utilize their physical, human and financial resources. Naturally, as resources decline, school boards have assigned high priority to the maintenance and improvement of basic school programmes. Consequently, limited funds have been allocated to providing staff with professional develop-
ment activities. Due to a tight job market and a high level of uncertainty in education, most teachers and principals are only willing to further their own education on a part-time basis. Provincial universities across Canada are not providing a variety of professional development classes and programmes to partially satisfy this demand.

Many school districts throughout Canada have established their own training programmes for administrators. These short term, local oriented, professional development programmes often differ markedly, according to Tindall (1981) in terms of scope and selection criteria. Also, most programmes, due to their practical focus, offer principals minimal opportunity to develop the conceptual, analytical, and political skills cited by Campbell (1979) as being of major importance to future educational administrators.

New professional development programmes are urgently needed which will provide educational leaders with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to provide school systems with direction in a period characterized by limited funds, declining enrolments and a high level of uncertainty. At the Eighth Annual Western Canada Educational Administrators' Conference, Fast (1976) strongly emphasized that "we must have people in leadership roles who are not afraid to take positions, to take risks, to develop new policies and to meet needs" (p. 37). This 'new breed' of administrator will only be forthcoming if the pre-service and in-service training offered administrators is given more consideration by school districts, professional associations and universities. Existing preparation programmes must be more responsive to the current needs of administrators if they are to improve educational leadership (Martin, 1972).

New Professional Experiences

The Canadian federal government has endeavored, through a variety of educational, cultural and social activities, to unite the diverse regions of Canada. These interventions have provided Canadians, of all age groups and from all social strata, with an opportunity to share and to enjoy the nations rich cultural heritage. Both the physical geography and climate of the country, which are often perceived to limit social interaction and cultural integration, have been used effectively to establish and to nurture a robust national image.

Throughout Canada, the provincial school systems are endeavoring, with varying degrees of success, to sensitize children to the nations rich cultural heritage. Racial harmony and academic excellence are two important missions for contemporary schools. The hope of most learning experiences, involving some aspect of multiculturalism, as Roe (1982) notes, is "that young people's attitudes towards those from other cultures can be changed for the better" (p.5).

At an administrative level, superintendents, trustees and principals frequently possess minimal knowledge of multiculturalism and multi-racism. According to Hickcox, Murphy and Lavender (1984):

> Many school trustees and school administrators are not particularly well prepared to deal effectively with [the] rather bewildering array of problems and opportunities [of a multicultural character] (p.1).

This deficiency naturally has created a multitude of difficulties for school leaders when they endeavor to establish race relations policies or deal with race relations issues. By a variety of multicultural projects, the federal government has endeavored to eliminate this deficiency.

Information is presently being gathered on these professional development activities. Once this task has been completed, the authors will prepare brief descriptions and discussions about a small sample of them. This material is expected to be completed by the middle of may, 1987.

Discussion

The society in which we live is increasing in complexity as economic, social, cultural, technological and political forces change its basic structure. In this uncertain environment, educational systems are endeavoring to provide children with learning experiences which will prepare them for new futures. The extent to which this goal is achieved will depend significantly upon the leadership provided by educational administrators. Therefore, it is imperative that only the most able individuals are appointed to administrative positions. These leaders must, as Fast (1977) notes, "be dynamic, flexible and precise - able to work with people, anticipate and accommodate change and to make decisions" (p. 38).

Present preparation programmes for school leaders tend to emphasize the theories and concepts of educational administration or focus on the acquisition of low level managerial skills. Both approaches offer administrators certain benefits, but neither of them provides them with the complete education administrators need to cope effectively with the unique problems generated by our contemporary society. Towards the end of the seventies, Peach (1975) stated that "the challenge facing those involved in the preparation of educational administrators is clearly to produce high moral leaders committed to inducing educational and social change" (p. 263).

The professional development strategies presented in this report are designed to achieve this goal.

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